

Arkansas Child Welfare Review
Key Child and Family, Workload and Resource Factors that impact Outcomes
Arkansas DCFS – July 2015

System Strengths

1. Thoroughness of investigations has improved, from 58% in 2011 to 70% in 2015.
2. Improved the percentage in which caseworkers had a face-to-face contact with in-home families during three month periods from 75.8% in 2011 to 82.3 % in 2013.
3. Percent of children receiving supportive or protective services (in-home) who are abused or neglected within one year is at 9%, down from 15% the two preceding years.
4. Generally exceeds national standards relative to the length of time children spend in foster care, reunification within 12 months and rates of re-entry to care.
5. Average time to adoption, has decreased from 25.4 months in 2011 to 22.1 in 2014.
6. Policy on post-adoptive services expanded in 2015,
7. Federal waiver secured to permit use of federal foster care funds more flexibly,
8. Federal foster and adoptive recruitment and retention grant secured,
9. New casework assessment tools implemented,
10. Advocacy Council to provide external input created,
11. New worker training structure designed and provided new training to staff,
12. Provisions of new statutes permitting guardianships and fictive kin to become caregivers implemented
13. Differential Response, a flexible assessment process for low-risk child protection cases implemented
14. New Quality Assurance and quality improvement efforts initiated
15. Permanency Roundtable, approach to moving children and youth to permanency implemented.

System Challenges

1. Percentage of timely initiations has dropped from 94% in 2011 for Priority I investigations to 86% in 2015.
2. Monthly visits in in-home cases occurred only in 66 percent of cases
3. Percentage of children with true allegations with a subsequent report in 6 months is 6% currently, slightly higher than the national standard of 5.4%. The percentage has gone down from a high of 9% in 2012.
4. An increase in child fatalities where the family was known to DCFS from 23 fatalities in FY 2011 to 40 (to date) in FY 2015, but no causal effects were evident in this review.
5. Number of children exiting foster care is declining.
6. Total number of children in foster care is rising
7. Relatively high number of foster children in non-family settings, at 19%.
8. Placement crisis - Currently nearly 55% of children are placed in a county outside of their own county.
9. Little or no net growth in number of family foster home beds, only 0.66 foster care beds/child,
10. Low rate of placements of children with relatives (14%) much lower than surrounding states.
11. Average DCFS caseworker caseloads are over 29 cases, nearly double national recommended of 1/15.
12. Children more likely to be in emergency short-term placements and placement disruptions are rising.
13. DCFS struggled to fully engage external stakeholders in some areas and counties with greatest workloads
14. A frustrated and discouraged work force has increased turnover and contributed to workload stresses.
15. Arkansas mental health system is experiencing challenges in developing the ability to provide the type of home and community-based mental health supports needed by children in foster and adoptive homes.